NEEDS FOR AN OBSERVATION CARD AND BREEDING BIRD SURVEY PROGRAM IN ALASKA

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Abstract: Little information has been compiled on the distributions,
abundances, and population trends of the 320+ bird species regularly
occurring in Alaska. Accurate distribution information allows selection
of research sites, identification of species with restricted ranges for
setting research and management priorities, and in evaluating impacts of
habitat changes. In addition, distribution information is useful to the
public interested in opportunities to view and enjoy particular species.
Information on population trends is needed to determine if, and to what
degree, any species populations are declining or expanding. Such infor-
mation is needed to identify potential conservation problems before a
species population declines to the point of being threatened or endangered.
Bird populations are most easily monitored during nesting; over 50

species breed nowhere in the United States except Alaska. Better distribution and population trend information could be obtained in Alaska by using volunteer observers. Volunteer observation card and breeding bird survey programs have provided useful information in some lower 48 states. Benefits of volunteer programs include: coverage of large areas in a short time at low cost, involvement of interested public, and potentially increased public appreciation of the diversity of birds in Alaska. Potential problems include: a shortage of experienced observers, observer variability, inaccurate observations, and difficulty of access to many areas. These problems may be overcome by starting slowly, training observers, attention to accuracy, and by modifying the breeding bird survey technique. Success of such programs depends upon interagency cooperation and dedicated amateur and professional volunteers.

ALASKA MIGRATORY BIRD CONFERENCE
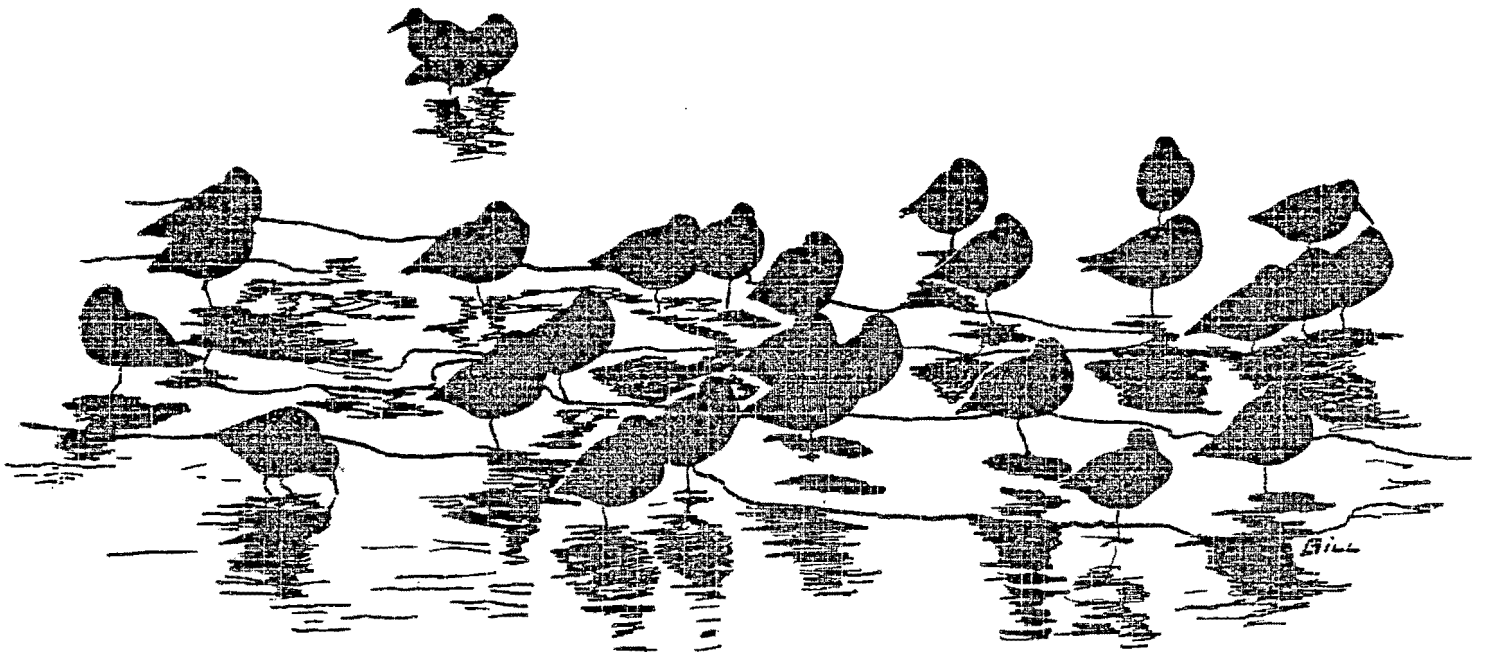
PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

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